

# DR. COOK DISCUSSES ALL KINDS OF LIARS



"I said I did not know if I had reached the mathematical pole."

My object all sublime  
I shall achieve in time.  
To make the chronicle prove the crime,  
The chronicler prove the crime;  
So men of every age,  
Condemned on history's page,  
Can make an alibi all the rage,  
An alibi all the rage.

—Mikado, Arctic version.

IT'S a funny thing that nobody seems ever to have asked Dr. Frederick A. Cook, the famous north pole purveyor, right out and out if he was a liar. Although it is a harsh word to use, the doctor has been called a liar—once or twice, here and there—but never to his face, so far as is known. In his recent book, "My Attainment of the Pole," the best denunciated man of any time or clime says that "liar," "fake," "fraud" and "impostor" have been volleyed at him from Patagonia to Siberia, with firing still brisk at intervals. But never once was he asked what he thought of himself or how on earth he expected to get away with it.

Now it was Mark Twain who said that even the devil must have some sort of case. So a SUNDAY SUN man decided that it would be quite original to step right up to Dr. Cook and teasingly inquire if he was a liar. You know the way—advance right close to a man, look at him with suspicious significance and say: "Look here, Snodgrass, you know d-d-deuced well you never swam that mile in twenty minutes! Your seconds and trainer rowed you in their boat part of the way. Now aren't you a liar?" Just in that straightforward way would the doctor be asked to admit the truth about the little Arctic episode and have the facts riveted right in acid tested history.

It seemed a propitious time to do the asking. The doctor had recently attended a banquet in Newark at which he had gone over the pole seeking journey of length. In closing the renowned ice tourist said this: "The Eskimos believe in a heaven and they think it a very hot place, naturally picturing it a happy contrast to their cold earthly home. Before I close I would say to you that if there is yet a doubt in your minds as to the truth of my claims and the discovery of the north pole, you will have to go either to the north pole or to the Eskimo heaven."

This incident seemed to reveal the doctor as being in good temper, to indicate that it was a right psychic time to ask him if he was a liar. So this SUN man started for the hotel of the explorer who has been the object of abuse for six continents. Many might have ridiculed the mission, arguing that the reason Dr. Cook had never been asked if he was a liar was because he would be bound to lie in making his reply. But this by no means follows. You ask a woman her age at the City Hall marriage license bureau and you expect a square answer. You ask about what was done with campaign contributions and when you are told that

some of them were returned to the donors you believe it. In fact there are instances a plenty to warrant the belief that a man may tell the truth about his lying as well as about his other peccadilloes.

And, furthermore, perhaps inquiry of the doctor might reveal that the newspapers had got the great garland winner all wrong. Maybe he had never denied that he had failed to turn the north pole stakeboat in the last race. It might be that he was just waiting for some good, frank sort of scout to come along and ask him to own up. It is true that some folks have contended right along that the doctor has been chuckling and gloating over the fake he is alleged to have put on two hemispheres. Others have maintained that he has been defiant in his denial of the accusations against him.

Did THE SUN man find him in either of these states of mind? Not on your Eskimo suit of clothes. Instead the doctor presented the amazing blend of a strong sense of the joke and a resignation to martyrdom. This latter he illustrated by naming his prototypes of history.

"Doctor," said THE SUN man mellowly, "are you—are you—are you aware of the full extent of the denunciation that has been heaped upon you as the alleged monster impostor of any and all ages?" It was deemed best at the last instant to delay asking the doctor if he was a liar until just before leaving.

Dr. Cook aquired himself, leaned forward in his chair, only arm's length distant, gazed at THE SUN man out of clear blue eyes with an open polar sea expression of candor that inspired conviction and answered gravely:

"I have been called the mathematical fraud of all time, I know it."

"Well, uh, doctor, do you deserve to be, or rather you didn't deserve to be called a—"

"I did not," broke in the doctor. The question was unnecessary.

"But, doctor, wasn't there some reason for this cry of fraud? Some small, inconsequential, reason, perhaps, but still some reason?"

"The reason lies with the malicious, benighted and prejudiced. I was asked if I had discovered the north pole. I said I did not know for sure."

"After you had been acclaimed the discoverer of the pole? After you had received the keys of New York and the big wreaths—after this, doctor, you said you didn't know whether or not you had discovered the north pole?"

"After all this," said Dr. Cook, "I suppose the public thought it mildly queer that you'd consent to be the north pole discoverer and then say you were not sure you discovered it."

"The intelligent should not have thought so. I was asked if I had reached the exact mathematical pole. I said I did not know. It would be like

ing beside Leader Murphy of Tammany Hall. It is drawn to show that I claim to have discovered the north pole, but when I am asked to produce the pole I cover the alleged lie by saying that I gave the pole back. Leader Murphy is represented as saying he gave a campaign contribution back. It's droll, all right."

Capt. Evelyn B. Baldwin, the organizer of the Baldwin-Ziegler polar expedition of 1901-02, came in at this juncture. He joined in the laugh over the cartoon and produced another showing Admiral Peary offering some gumdrops to Dr. Cook. This caused more laughter.

"In addition to the comfort of humor I feel that as a martyr to my achievement I am only suffering the same as many have done in past centuries until history has set them right. There is no secured and rectified during their lifetime, but gloriously vindicated afterward."

"You mean those who were called liars and fake and frauds and impostors, doctor?"

"Exactly, and explorers among them."

"Has history set 'em all right, doctor? Are there a few more vindications to be given yet?"

"Well, there's my own could be made a little more complete than at the present status of affairs. Mine is coming, however, very shortly. Thousands of people are coming to see the thing as it is every day. An article by Edwin Swift Balch last April shows how men in the advance of things have been treated. He says:

"From time immemorial travellers have been called liars, and it is on this general assumption of their Munchausen-like proclivities that much of the weight of argument against Dr. Cook depends. Marco Polo, greatest of medieval travellers, was generally discredited, and Fernao Mendes Pinto, Nathaniel B. Palmer, Robert Johnson, James Weddell, Nordenskjöld, Bruce, Charcot, Dr. Krapf, Collier and Dr. Robmann were for a time reviled as fabricators."

"David Livingston was called a crazy imposter when his first African exploration reports reached civilization. Henry M. Stanley was dubbed a plain liar for quite a time. Paul Belloni du Chailu was accused of fabricating his account of his publications more attractive. All received good doses of mud, and yet all have been honored later."

"Do you suppose, doctor, that any of the people named as bad men and women in history may have been

## Those Who Doubt His Discovery Story He Advises to Go to the Eskimo Heaven—Records of Fakes, Frauds and Impostors May Be Wrong

contending you had stood on a pin head in the middle of the ice. I reached 90 degrees north, at a spot on the polar sea 530 miles north of Svartvees, April 21, 1908. That I stood at the time on the very pivotal pin point of the earth I do not and never did claim. I may have, I may not."

"Doctor, you have used a strong word. You speak of pin head proof. Do you mean that you would need that kind of discovery to satisfy a doubter?"

"Exactly—a pin head."

"Doctor, having been so grievously calumniated, how have you managed to bear up under these charges of fake, fraud and lie?"

"First, I have a strong sense of humor. I have laughed heartily many times at the cartoons having captions calling me a fake and a liar and a silver gumdrops as a bribe to Eskimos. Here is one of them now. See, it shows me with a wreath about my neck stand-



Dr. Frederick A. Cook.

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